



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**CHARACTERIZATION OF ACID DEPOSITION AT PASOH FOREST
RESERVE AND SEPANG FIRE-PEAT SWAMP**

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**CHARACTERIZATION OF ACID DEPOSITION AT PASOH FOREST
RESERVE AND SEPANG FIRE-PEAT SWAMP**

By

TAY AI CHEN

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master**

September 2002



DEDICATION

This thesis is especially dedicated to my family and friends who have been giving me lots of support and encouragement as well as advice in my studies.

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science

**CHARACTERIZATION OF ACID DEPOSITION AT PASOH FOREST
RESERVE AND SEPANG FIRE-PEAT SWAMP**

By

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September 2002

Chairman: Dr. Ahmad Makmom Abdullah

Faculty: Science and Environmental Studies

Pasoh Forest Reserve is located away from industrialized or urbanized areas. As a remote area, therefore Pasoh Forest Reserve is important to provide baseline information on the level of soil acidification in Malaysia. Furthermore, studies on the natural fires soil such as Sepang fire-peat are rare in Malaysia. The investigation of natural fires soil is essential for comparison purposes to Pasoh Forest Reserve. Hence, the objective of the study was to determine the physico-chemical properties of soils at Pasoh Forest Reserve and Sepang fire-peat swamp for evaluating the extent of acid deposition. Six subplots with dimension of 1 m x 1 m x 1 m were selected at the Pasoh Forest Reserve, while, only one plot with dimension of 1 m x 1 m x 1 m was dug at the Sepang fire-peat swamp. Soil samples were taken from every 10 cm layer until 1 m depth. For each soil sample, acidity (pH), moisture content, bulk density, electrical conductivity, available phosphate (PO_4^{2-}), available sulphate (SO_4^{2-}), exchangeable acidity, exchangeable Al and H, exchangeable base cations, effective cation exchangeable capacity (ECEC) and base saturation were determined. At top part of soil profile at Pasoh Forest Reserve, there was an *A* horizon, characterized by dark brown colour as a result of an accumulation of humified organic matter intimately mixed with mineral matter. Below the *A* horizon, there was

an *E* horizon, which was lighter in colour and texture. Below the *E* horizon, there was an *EB* horizon, which was dominated by the properties of *E* master horizon but with some properties of *B* master horizon. The *B* horizon was granular, blocky, or prismatic structure. The Pasoh Forest Reserve soils are clayey and acidic. The natural soil fires at Sepang caused destruction of soil structure as well as its texture, thus no clear horizon could be observed and the soil was sandy. Throughout 1 m soil depth, Pasoh Forest Reserve and Sepang fire-peat soils showed variation of soil properties. The results indicated that Pasoh Forest Reserve soils were more acidic than Sepang fire-peat soils. By comparing to the Pasoh Forest Reserve soils, the Sepang fire-peat soils showed lower mean values in bulk density and exchangeable acidity, but higher mean values in electrical conductivity, pH, base saturation, available sulphate and available phosphate. Sepang fire-peat soils were also showed relatively high values in exchangeable Mg and Ca, but low values in exchangeable K and Na. Furthermore, mean base saturation values of Sepang fire-peat soils and Pasoh Forest Reserve soils were $97.87 \pm 2.42\%$ and $78.77 \pm 3.78\%$, respectively. The base saturation of Pasoh Forest Reserve soil was strongly correlated with the exchangeable Ca, whereas the base saturation of Sepang fire-peat soil was strongly correlated with exchangeable acidity. The significant differences between Pasoh Forest Reserve and Sepang fire-peat soils were attributable to changes of soil composition after soil fires in Sepang causing mineral transformation. However, the physico-chemical properties of Pasoh Forest Reserve soils were similar to the previous findings by the Allbrook (1973) and Yoda (1978). Thus, the Pasoh Forest Reserve soils were presumably not unaffected by acid deposition. Additionally, there was no appreciable soil acidification occurred in the Pasoh Forest Reserve since 1973 (29 years).

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**PENCIRIAN LONGGOKAN ASID DI HUTAN SIMPANAN PASOH DAN
PAYA GAMBUT TERBAKAR SEPANG**

Oleh

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Hutan Simpanan Pasoh terletak jauh dari kawasan industri dan bandar. Sebagai kawasan terpencil, Hutan tersebut adalah penting untuk memberikan maklumat asas berkaitan tahap keasidan tanah di Malaysia. Tambahan pula, kajian-kajian tentang tanah terbakar semulajadi seperti gambut terbakar Sepang adalah kurang di Malaysia. Penyelidikan tentang tanah terbakar semulajadi adalah mustahak sebagai tujuan perbandingan dengan Hutan Simpanan Pasoh. Maka, objektif kajian ini adalah untuk menentukan ciri-ciri fizikal and kimia tanah Hutan Simpanan Pasoh dan tanah gambut terbakar Sepang untuk menilai tahap longgokan asid. Enam subplot dengan dimensi 1 m x 1 m x 1 m telah dipilih di Hutan Simpanan Pasoh, manakala, hanya satu plot dengan dimensi 1 m x 1 m x 1m telah digali di paya gambut terbakar Sepang. Sampel tanah telah diambil dari setiap lapisan 10 cm sehingga kedalaman 1 m. Bagi setiap sampel tanah, keasidan (pH), kandungan air, ketumpatan pukal, kekonduksian elektrik, ion fosfat (PO_4^{2-}), ion sulfat (SO_4^{2-}), keasidan boleh-tukar, Al dan H boleh-tukar, kation bes boleh-tukar, kapasiti kation boleh-tukar berkesan (ECEC) dan ketepuan bes telah ditentukan. Bahagian atas profil tanah di Hutan Simpanan Pasoh, terdapat A horizon, berwarna perang gelap yang disebabkan oleh timbunan bahan organik basah bercampur dengan bahan mineral. Di bawah A horizon, terdapat

E horizon, yang terang dari segi warna dan tekstur. Di bawah E horizon, terdapat EB horizon, yang dipengaruhi oleh sifat E master horizon dengan sedikit sifat B master horizon. B horizon adalah struktur yang kasar, berbatu, atau dinamik. Tanah Hutan Simpanan Pasoh adalah bersifat liat dan asid. Pembakaran semulajadi tanah di Sepang menyebabkan kemusnahan struktur tanah dan teksturnya, maka horizon tidak jelas kelihatan dan tanah adalah berpasir. Sepanjang kedalaman 1 m tanah, Hutan Simpanan Pasoh dan paya gambut terbakar Sepang menunjukkan kepelbagaian ciri-ciri tanah. Keputusan menunjukkan tanah Hutan Simpanan Pasoh adalah lebih asid daripada tanah gambut terbakar Sepang. Berbanding dengan tanah Hutan Simpanan Pasoh, tanah gambut terbakar Sepang menunjukkan nilai purata ketumpatan pukal dan keasidan boleh-tukar lebih rendah, tetapi nilai purata kekonduksian elektrik, pH, ketepuan bes, ion sulfat dan ion fosfat lebih tinggi. Tanah gambut terbakar Sepang mengandungi nilai Mg dan Ca boleh-tukar yang tinggi, tetapi nilai K dan Na boleh-tukar yang rendah. Tambahan pula, nilai purata ketepuan bes di tanah gambut terbakar Sepang adalah $97.87 \pm 2.42\%$ dan tanah Hutan Simpanan Pasoh adalah $78.77 \pm 3.78\%$. Ketepuan bes di tanah Hutan Simpanan Pasoh adalah berkorelasi baik dengan Ca boleh-tukar, manakala ketepuan bes di tanah gambut terbakar Sepang berkorelasi baik dengan keasidan boleh-tukar. Perbezaan bermakna antara tanah Hutan Simpanan Pasoh dan tanah gambut terbakar Sepang adalah disebabkan perubahan komposisi tanah setelah pembakaran tanah di Sepang mengakibatkan transformasi mineral. Walau bagaimanapun, ciri fizikal dan kimia bagi tanah Hutan Simpanan Pasoh adalah sama dengan keputusan penyelidikan yang dijalankan oleh Allbrook (1973) dan Yoda (1978). Oleh sebab itu, tanah Pasoh boleh dianggap tidak dipengaruhi oleh longgokan asid. Di samping itu, tiada keasidan tanah berlaku di Hutan Simpanan Pasoh sejak 1973 (29 tahun).

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I certify that an Examination Committee met on 18th September 2002 to conduct the final examination of Tay Ai Chen on her Master of Science thesis entitled “Characterization of Acid Deposition at Pasoh Forest Reserve and Sepang Fire-peat Swamp” in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that the candidate be awarded the relevant degree. Members of the Examination Committee are as follows:

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions.



TAY AI CHEN

Date: *26 September 2002*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
DEDICATION	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ABSTRAK	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
APPROVAL SHEETS	ix
DECLARATION FORM	xi
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
LIST OF FIGURES	xvi
LIST OF PLATES	xix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xx
 CHAPTER	
 I INTRODUCTION	 1
Objective of the Study	8
Significance of the Study	9
Scope of the Study	9
 II LITERATURE REVIEW	 11
Soil	11
Physical Properties of Soils	12
Soil Profile	12
Soil Texture	14
Bulk Density	17
Electrical Conductivity	18
Chemical Properties of Soils	20
Soil pH	20
Soil Acidity	22
Exchangeable Acidity	25
CEC and Base Saturation	27
Sulphur	30
Phosphorus	32
Mineralization and Immobilization	34
Soil Acidification	36
Atmospheric Acidity	40
 III MATERIALS AND METHODS	 43
Site Description	43
Pasoh Forest Reserve	43
Sepang Fire-peat Swamp	44
Soil Sampling	45
Soil Sample Preparation	47
Soil Analytical Procedures	47
Instruments of Analysis	55
Atomic Absorption Spectrophotometer	55
Spectrophotometer	56
Soil Sample Ring Kits	57



	pH Meter	58
	Shaker	58
	Balance	59
	Conductivity Meter	59
	Statistical Analysis	59
IV	RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	61
	Soil Properties of Pasoh Forest Reserve	61
	Soil Profile	61
	Bulk Density	64
	Electrical Conductivity	67
	Soil pH	69
	Exchangeable Acidity	74
	Exchangeable Base Cations	82
	ECEC	93
	Base Saturation	96
	Available Sulphate	99
	Available Phosphate	103
	Relationships among the Soil Properties	107
	Soil Properties of Sepang Fire-peat Swamp	113
	Soil Profile	113
	Bulk Density	114
	Electrical Conductivity	115
	Soil pH	116
	Exchangeable Acidity	117
	Exchangeable Base Cations	120
	ECEC	122
	Base Saturation	123
	Available Sulphate	124
	Available Phosphate	125
	Relationships among the Soil Properties	126
	Comparison of Soil Properties between Pasoh Forest Reserve and Sepang Fire-peat Swamp	132
V	CONCLUSION	141
	REFERENCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY	144
	APPENDICES	
	Appendix A: Meteorological Data	154
	Appendix B: One-way Analysis of Variance	160
	Appendix C: Generalized Model for site comparison	183
	Appendix D: Calibration Curves	187
	Appendix E: Soil Analytical Data	189
	Appendix F: Throughfall, Stemflow and Rainwater Chemistry in Peninsular Malaysia	193
	BIODATA OF THE AUTHOR	194

LIST OF TABLES

Tables		Page
1	Classification of particle size ranges of soil separates	16
2	Water classes and their salt concentration and electrical conductivity	19
3	Soil reactivity	24
4	Analytic wave length and standard solution used for AA Spectrophotometry	56
5	Description statistics of soil bulk density at Pasoh Forest Reserve	66
6	Description statistics of soil electrical conductivity at Pasoh Forest Reserve	69
7	Description statistics of soil pH(H ₂ O) and pH(KCl) at Pasoh Forest Reserve	73
8	Description statistics of soil exchangeable acidity at Pasoh Forest Reserve	76
9	Description statistics of soil exchangeable Al at Pasoh Forest Reserve	79
10	Description statistics of soil exchangeable H at Pasoh Forest Reserve	81
11	Description statistics of soil exchangeable Mg at Pasoh Forest Reserve	85
12	Description statistics of soil exchangeable K at Pasoh Forest Reserve	87
13	Description statistics of soil exchangeable Na at Pasoh Forest Reserve	89
14	Description statistics of soil exchangeable Ca at Pasoh Forest Reserve	91
15	Changes of soil exchangeable base cations at Pasoh Forest Reserve prior to and after 29 years	92
16	Description statistics of soil ECEC at Pasoh Forest Reserve	95
17	Description statistics of soil base saturation at Pasoh Forest Reserve	98
18	Description statistics of soil available sulphate at Pasoh Forest Reserve	101

19	Description statistics of soil available phosphate at Pasoh Forest Reserve	107
20	Correlation matrix of the soil properties at Pasoh Forest Reserve	108
21	Correlation matrix of soil properties at Sepang fire-peat swamp	127
22	Comparison of soil properties between Pasoh Forest Reserve and Sepang fire-peat swamp	134

LIST OF FIGURES

Figures		Page
1	Soil textural triangle	15
2	The physical, chemical, and biological factors that influence that pH value of the soil solution	24
3	Locations of Pasoh Forest Reserve (Psh) in Negeri Sembilan and Sepang peat swamp (Spg) in Selangor states of Peninsular Malaysia	44
4	Sampling plot design	45
5	Procedure of moisture content analysis	48
6	Procedure of pH analysis	48
7	Procedure of exchangeable base cations analysis	49
8	Procedure of exchangeable acidity analysis	50
9	Procedure of exchangeable Al and H analysis	51
10	Procedure of electrical conductivity analysis	52
11	Procedure of available phosphate analysis	53
12	Procedure of available sulphate analysis	54
13	Procedure of bulk density analysis	55
14	Soil horizons of soil profile at Pasoh Forest Reserve	63
15	Variation of bulk density within the soil profile of Pasoh Forest Reserve	65
16	Variation of electrical conductivity within 1 m depth of soils at Pasoh Forest Reserve	68
17	Variation of pH within 1 m depth of soils at Pasoh Forest Reserve	71
18	Variation of exchangeable acidity within 1 m depth of soils at Pasoh Forest Reserve	75
19	Variation of exchangeable Al within 1 m depth of soils at Pasoh Forest Reserve	78

20	Variation of exchangeable H within 1 m depth of soils at Pasoh Forest Reserve	80
21	Variation of exchangeable Mg within 1 m depth of soils at Pasoh Forest Reserve	84
22	Variation of exchangeable K within 1 m depth of soils at Pasoh Forest Reserve	86
23	Variation of exchangeable Na within 1 m depth of soils at Pasoh Forest Reserve	88
24	Variation of exchangeable Ca within 1 m depth of soils at Pasoh Forest Reserve	90
25	Variation of ECEC within 1 m depth of soils at Pasoh Forest Reserve	94
26	Variation of base saturation within 1 m depth of soils at Pasoh Forest Reserve	97
27	Variation of available sulphate within 1 m depth of soils at Pasoh Forest Reserve	100
28	Variation of available phosphate within 1 m depth of soils at Pasoh Forest Reserve	105
29	Relationships among the soil properties at Pasoh Forest Reserve	110
30	Variation of bulk density within the soil profile of Sepang fire-peat swamp	115
31	Variation of electrical conductivity within 1 m depth of soils at Sepang fire-peat swamp	116
32	Variation of pH within 1 m depth of soils at Sepang fire-peat swamp	117
33	Variation of exchangeable acidity within 1 m depth of soils at Sepang fire-peat swamp	118
34	Variation of exchangeable Al within 1 m depth of soils at Sepang fire-peat swamp	119
35	Variation of exchangeable H within 1 m depth of soils at Sepang fire-peat swamp	120
36	Variation of exchangeable base cations within 1 m depth of soils at Sepang fire-peat swamp	121

37	Variation of ECEC within 1 m depth of soils at Sepang fire-peat swamp	122
38	Variation of base saturation within 1 m depth of soils at Sepang fire-peat swamp	123
39	Variation of available sulphate within 1 m depth of soils at Sepang fire-peat swamp	124
40	Variation of available phosphate within 1 m depth of soils at Sepang fire-peat swamp	125
41	Relationships among the soil properties at Sepang fire-peat swamp	128
42	Monthly precipitation and temperature for (a) Pasoh Forest Reserve and (b) Sepang fire-peat swamp	133

LIST OF PLATES

Plates		Page
1	Background of subplot in the Pasoh Reserve Forest	46
2	Background of plot in the Sepang fire-peat swamp	46
3	Atomic Absorption Spectrophotometer (AAS) single beam	56
4	Soil sample ring kit	58
5	Master horizons for soil profile at Pasoh Forest Reserve	61
6	Soil structure of Plot 2 (subplot 1) at Pasoh Forest Reserve	64
7	Master horizons for soil profile at Sepang fire-peat swamp	114

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia	EANET
Acid neutralization capacity	ANC
Atomic Absorption	AA
Atomic Absorption Spectrophotometer	AAS
Base saturation	BS
British Standards Institute	BSI
Bulk density	ρ_b
Cation exchange capacity	CEC
Cation-exchange capacities	CECs
Dissolved oxygen	DO
Effective cation exchangeable capacity	ECEC
Electrical conductivity	EC
German Standards	DIN
High Volume Sampler	HVS
International Soil Science Society	ISSS
London Chamber of Commerce and Industry Examination Board	LCCI
Malaysian Rice	MR
Malaysian Science and Technology Congress	MSTC
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	MIT
Moisture correction factor	mcf
Natural Resources and Environmental Management	NREM
Soil organic matter	SOM
Total acidity	TA
U.S. Department of Agriculture	USDA
U.S. Public Roads Administration	USPRA



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Acid deposition has been recognized as a complex scientific problem causing the decline in forest growth and deterioration of fish populations in acidified lakes. The international aspects of acidification are obvious. In most countries, the share of emissions from neighbouring countries in the total deposition is significant. Not only in small countries, but also in large countries with relatively low emissions, a high percentage of the acid deposition can be traced to foreign origin (Alders, 1992). Hence, a large number of specialist fields are involved and international co-operation is also needed in this scientific research (Alders, 1992).

Nearly two decades ago, the Swedish Report to the United Nations forecast forest growth declined of approximately 1.5% per year was caused by acid deposition (Johnson et al., 1992). However, forest declines as the result of soil acidification and nutrient deficiency are concerned until now. Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia (EANET) has been started in 1998 for soil and vegetation in the participating countries of EANET. East Asian countries have experienced rapid economic growth and industrialization in recent 20 years (Lu, 1999). However the environmental pollution, especially the air pollution and acid rain, is going to be more serious in East Asian region (Lu, 1999). A workshop on Ecological Impact Monitoring of Acid Deposition in East Asia had been held in 1999 and attended by the EANET participating countries (EANET, 1999). The matters discussed were:

- (i) the technical information on soil and vegetation survey for the participating countries of EANET,
- (ii) the methodologies on soil and vegetation survey and its quality assurance or quality control activities suitable for East Asia and
- (iii) the ways for considering the monitoring guidelines and technical manual, and reviewing the quality assurance or quality control program for soil and vegetation monitoring.

The programs that have been carried out by EANET include inter-laboratory comparison, collaboration with other international organizations as well as soil and vegetation monitoring training. It is important because these programs needed to get a comprehensive and systematic manner in monitoring the acid deposition through establishment of good quality database. Furthermore, acid deposition is one of our serious international environmental issues, which requires international cooperation for solution at this moment.

The term “acid deposition” is often used as a synonym for “acid rain” or “acid precipitation” (Schlaepfer, 1992). In more specific manner, the term “acid deposition” can be defined as the input of all components into an ecosystem, which determine the net proton flux in the system. Acid rain in this context is only a part of acid deposition. For determination of total acidity input, the interception of sulphur and nitrogen containing particles as well as the dry deposition of nitrogen dioxide, nitric acid, sulphur dioxide and ammonia have to be concluded. Several processes can result in the formation of acid deposition. Most wet acid deposition forms when nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and sulphur dioxide (SO_2) are converted to nitric acid (HNO_3)

and sulfuric acid (H_2SO_4) respectively through oxidation and dissolution. Moreover, ammonia gas (NH_3) from natural sources can be converted into ammonium (NH_4) to form wet deposition.

Dry deposition may be broadly defined as the transport of particulate and gaseous contaminants from the atmosphere onto surface in the absence of precipitation (Davidson and Wu, 1990). It is worthwhile to consider dry deposition as part of an overall atmosphere-surface change. Gases are sometimes reversibly absorbed onto surfaces only to be reemitted, whereas particles may be deposited and subsequently resuspended (Davidson and Wu, 1990). Accidental exposure to acidic aerosols is a well-recognized hazard (Wellburn, 1993). An aerosol is defined as a suspension of solid or liquid in a gaseous medium (Lipfert, 1991). Acid particles include sulphuric acid, ammonium biosulfate (NH_4HSO_4) and certain organic compounds (Lipfert, 1991). Aerosols induce irritations and pulmonary disturbances. The main differences arise from the size of the aerosols droplets. Droplets sizes of $0.8\text{ }\mu\text{m}$ or less are the most harmful. In other words, more lung damage is caused by a lesser amount of acidity if it is more finely divided.

Wet deposition is better described as ‘wet precipitation’, which, because it is an intermittent event, means that the effects of acidic precipitation are experienced irregularly (Wellburn, 1993). The formation of droplets in clouds, which then removes atmospheric pollutants as it falls as rain-out, is very efficient process.

Acid deposition is defined as the sum of dry deposited sulphur dioxide (SO_2) and the wet deposition of strong acid (proton, H^+), as these are the most important

acidifying components. Dry deposition of gaseous nitric acid (HNO_3), hydrochloric acid, sulphuric acid (H_2SO_4) or organic acids are not taken into consideration, since these compounds are found at very low concentration levels in the rural area (Hovmand and Bille-Hansen, 1999).

Concern for acidic deposition in North America evolved in the early 1970s to become the major environmental issue of the 1980s. As in Europe, early issues of air pollution in North America dealt with the elimination of black smoke from home chimneys and factories in primarily urban or heavily industrialized settings. With the Scandinavian studies of the 1950s and 1960s, increasing evidence pointed to acidic precipitation as a key factor in the deterioration of fisheries in remote lakes. Sulphate and nitrate from air pollution were blamed for the rainfall's acidity. The pollution in Scandinavia was thought to be from distant sources. In short, the concern for local air quality rapidly evolved into international debates of one country's air pollution affecting other countries downwind (Ellis et al., 1990).

For several decades, Canadian scientists have been aware of the environmental damage to terrestrial and aquatic systems that can result from SO_2 emissions from point sources. In fact, the first reported case was a transboundary pollution problem. Sulphur dioxide emissions from a smelter located in Trail, British Columbia, caused environmental damage to areas across the border in the state of Washington (Keith and Dillon, 1990).

Nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and sulphur dioxide (SO_2) released into the atmosphere from a variety of sources fall to the ground simply as dry deposition.